



NORWICH  
City Council

## COUNCIL

27 January 2009

### Questions to Executive Members and Committee Chairs

#### Question 1

##### **Councillor Claire Stephenson to the Executive Member for Housing and Adults and Older People:-**

'At its January meeting, the City Wide Board of Norwich Tenants and Residents Associations passed a motion of no confidence in the Council. What work is being done as a result of this motion to rebuild the trust and regain the confidence of our tenants and residents?'

##### **Councillor Brenda Arthur, Executive Member for Housing and Adults and Older People's reply:-**

'I am very aware of the concerns of the Board and this Administration is keen to ensure that we move forward positively and to that end we are determined to build strong and positive relations with all our tenants and leaseholders and their representatives in the future. We have already begun to take some steps but recognise it will take time to gain the confidence of the Board. I, together with the Chief Executive Officer, have written individually to all members of the City Wide Board following the Board passing a motion of no confidence.

We know that different Tenants' Associations and representatives have different views and needs and therefore have given individual members the contact details of a member of staff who will act as a liaison with the Board and deal with the views of Tenant's Associations which will then allow the Council to assess the best method of meeting the needs of tenants.

I have made it known to the City Wide Board that the Council is particularly keen to know –

- How would tenants most like to be involved in influencing council services?
- How can we best make use of the expertise in the City Wide Board?
- What issues would they like to consider at the City Wide Board meetings as a priority?

The Democratic Services Team will assist with the running of the board meetings to ensure that they run smoothly in future. They, in consultation with the chair and supported by the Liaison Officer, will agree agendas, papers in advance, the status of papers and ensure that the right officers are in attendance to advise and also to listen.

We share the views of the City Wide Board that there is a need to increase tenant involvement in council housing matters and are committed to achieving this. To begin this process I have suggested the setting up of a small group to review the constitution and working of the City Wide Board and its relationship with the Norwich Residents Association to see how we can make the meetings as productive as possible. Our Liaison Officer will take the lead on this in conjunction with the Democratic Services Team.'

There are of course areas of the city including Mile Cross, Fiddlewood, Bowthorpe and the University ward which do not have recognised Tenants' Associations despite having large numbers of council properties. This is something we are working on through the community engagement team as well as looking at other ways of tenant participation such as the Talkback scheme.'

## **Question 2**

**Councillor Rupert Read to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-**

'Is the Executive member aware of any cases where the Council procures Israeli goods and does the Executive member support calls for a boycott of such goods?'

**Councillor Alan Waters, Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance's reply:-**

'I am not aware of cases where the Council procures Israeli goods.'

To the second part of the question I can only give a personal view. What I would prefer to see, as an immediate priority, following the horror of the 'asymmetrical' war that killed hundreds of civilians, is the end of the 'collective punishment' of 1.5 million people locked up inside Gaza who have in effect been boycotted by the 'international community.'

## **Question 3**

**Councillor Bob Gledhill to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-**

'When will the decision as to whether to bring the services currently provided by CityCare back into the hands of the Council be made?'

**Councillor Alan Waters, the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance's reply:-**

'The Executive has set up a cross party Central Working Party for members to consider the key issues for the Council in re-letting the services provided by CityCare.'

The Contracts Working Party have considered a wide range of issues, in particular, how to ensure that social, economic and environmental issues are covered comprehensively, and to consider in house service provision.

Recommendations from the Contracts Working Party were considered by the Executive at their meeting on 21 January 2009, when they considered the overall approach to the re-let of these services. The minute of the meeting is set out below:-

**‘RESOLVED to –**

- (1) agree the proposed strategy;
- (2) note that the scope of services discussed at the Contracts Working Party on 9 January 2009 is work in progress that is moving the re-provisioning of services in the right direction but will be further refined and returned to the Executive for approval;
- (3) agree that the in-sourcing of services is discounted but reserved as an option if the market does not provide the required level of services at an affordable price; and
- (4) agree that the next generation of contract renewals provides the opportunity for exploring the in-sourcing of services in more detail.’

I will be happy to elaborate on the reasoning behind the recommendations should Councillor Gledhill wish to ask me a supplementary question.’

#### **Question 4**

**Councillor Tom Dylan to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-**

‘What will the total cost of the various CityCare contracts be from the period 2000–2010, and what proportion is this of the total Council budget?’

**Councillor Alan Waters, the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance’s reply:-**

‘The total cost of the CityCare contracts for the period 2000-2010 will be £334 million. For 2008/9 this represents 16% of the total Council budget.’

#### **Question 5**

**Councillor Ruth Makoff to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-**

‘Given the current economic climate, what is the Council’s approach towards those who find themselves in rent or Council Tax arrears?’

**Councillor Alan Waters, the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance's reply:-**

'To assist customers the arrears team has introduced an Arrears Prevention Officer, and also have three full time money advisers exclusively to assist council tenants. All arrears officers give budgeting and welfare advice to customers and assist them to claim housing benefits and other state benefits they may be entitled to.

The Council gives pre-tenancy advice to potential tenants from hostels and supported lodgings within Norwich, and use alternatives (a nationally recognised pre-court initiative scheme) rather than taking possession action, officers are making sustainable agreements and allowing customers to spread their payments further. Local firms who are making large redundancies are visited to give their staff better information about claiming housing benefit and getting money/debt advice.

Tenants can be assisted with energy savings tips, for example installation of water meters, social tariffs for gas and electric suppliers, the money advice service is regularly advertised in 'Tenant Talk'. All arrears officers promote credit unions and give advice on potential loan sharks or door step lenders with Norwich.

The Council has a legal obligation to collect Council Tax, and the recovery procedures are the legislation, they provide for the issue of reminder notices and the issue of liability order where non payment continues. The issue of a liability order by a Court allows the Council to take a variety of action to recover the debt including the attachment of earning or benefit and the instruction of bailiffs. However before any action is taken after the issue of a liability order, the payer is invited to make an offer to settle the debt as well as supply details of their income and expenditure. The offer is usually accepted and providing it is maintained then no further action is taken. If the payer defaults without an explanation then the Council can institute another method of recovery. We encourage applications for Council Tax benefit where the payer is on a low income.

By taking this approach we are able to protect the interest of the majority whilst taking account of the circumstances of the individual. Legal Actions discourages those do not wish to make payment from further delaying payment at the expense of the majority. If it appears that the payer is in severe financial difficulty, the Revenues Staff will suggest that the payer takes independent financial advice.

If an approach is made when the first instalment is due then the debt the payments can be rescheduled, usually, without resulting to legal action.

Over the past few months the Council has been developing a financial inclusion strategy for the city, to be implemented in the summer of this year. Part of this work has involved a mapping exercise the Council's current service provision relating to the financial inclusion. This work shows that we already provide a number of services to support financial inclusion, and one of the key improvements we can make is to be better coordinated between services and partners. One of the issues that we will include in the financial inclusion strategy will be to increase the awareness of our staff and of our partners of who provides which services and who

people can signpost customers to for support and advice, both within and outside the Council.'

## **Question 6**

### **Councillor Stephen Little to the Leader of the Council:-**

'A large number of shops and businesses in small parades around the city such as Colman Road and Vauxhall Street are currently unable to access the grant funding provided by the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI) programme. Given the current economic downturn, will the Council look into providing more mainstream support to these local businesses?'

### **Councillor Steve Morphew, Leader of the Council's reply:-**

'LEGI funding aims to release the economic potential of the most deprived local areas in a community.

In its first two years, the LEGI Programme has supported more than 3,000 people in Norwich with skills training, employment and business advice; helping to set up 119 new businesses in the City and creating 186 new jobs. LEGI funds support the provision of free business advice and training to start-up and established small businesses across the whole of Norwich – demand has soared in the latter part of 2008/9 and this provision, which links to further mainstream support offered by Business Link and other key partners will be of particularly high value as the UK recession deepens.

£200,000 of LEGI funding has been used to improve the environment around many local shopping parades in the poorest areas of the City such as re-surfacing of car parking, improved paving and CCTV provision. A further £200,000 has been paid out in grant aid to many small locally-owned businesses in the six most deprived wards of Norwich – Mile Cross, Thorpe Hamlet, Lakenham, Mancroft, Bowthorpe and Wensum. The LEGI Programme Team and Advisory Board are currently investigating ways to broaden access to the Neighbourhood Business Grants Scheme whilst still ensuring that it targets the least well-off locally-owned businesses in the City – a revised Grants Scheme will be launched early in the new financial year.

In 2009, LEGI and many other economic development activities will be specifically tailored to further support the economic wellbeing of local businesses and individuals in these very challenging economic conditions.'

It is highly unlikely the council would have the resources to support local businesses in any direct financial sense but we are committed to do everything we realistically can to assist. The response to question 14 sets out more detail. Businesses experiencing serious problems may also qualify for business rate relief and should contact the council for details.'

## Question 7

### **Councillor Howard Jago to the Executive Member for Housing and Adults and Older People:-**

'The City Council signed a Tenant Participation Compact in late 2007. Can the Executive member report on the progress made towards achieving the goals of the compact?

### **Councillor Brenda Arthur, Executive Member for Housing and Adults and Older People's reply:-**

'The Executive are fully committed to ensuring that tenants have a full role in shaping the service they receive from the City Council as its landlord. This was laid out in November 2007 when the Executive Member for Housing signed the Tenant Participation Compact with the Chair of the City Wide Board.

This principle has been further developed with the development and recent adoption of a draft community engagement strategy which is now being consulted on.

An action plan was produced to address gaps in the existing service and provide clarity and direction for how residents would be involved.

The main goals of the compact are:

- To enable tenants to decide the level and pace of involvement
- To increase tenant training and information sessions
- To enable tenant representatives to effectively monitor performance
- To provide equal opportunities for participation
- To develop links outside the Landlord service
- To promote council transparency and openness

Some good progress has been made:

- The CityWide Board standards and performances sub-group monitors the neighbourhood and strategic housing service performance. Other sub groups and working groups have recently developed
- A programme of beacon mentoring was undertaken with the London Borough of Croydon (September 2007 to January 2008). The initiative identified a number of issues and made recommendations which the council both acknowledged and agreed
- Development of the Norwich Residents Forum as an umbrella group for all recognised resident groups in Norwich.
- Work has started on the appointment of tenant inspectors to be in place by April 2009.
- Tenant representatives are regularly taking part in estate walkabouts
- Briefing and information sessions have been held on a range of issues, the latest will be on the rent increase, the business plan and the capital programme on the 29<sup>th</sup> January.
- The Councils website has been refreshed to encourage greater participation

- The development of the Sheltered Housing Forum which aims to encourage tenants of sheltered housing to work with the Council and other stakeholders, i.e. NHS Norfolk, Norfolk Adult Social Services and the third sector.

However, the compact action plan is yet to be fully implemented. Work is required to bring together a group of residents, which reflect the demographic make up of our customers. Work to collect customer profile information is in progress and it will contribute to this.

The building blocks for effective resident participation are in place with examples of successful work with residents. However, resident participation is still to be fully embedded in the service's culture and work is required to achieve this.

In March 2008, the Executive agreed to develop a single council-wide community engagement team, which would take improvements to tenant participation into its brief. However, the Cave Review setting out a future vision for tenant participation was published in July 2008 so clearly we were unable to consider the Cave recommendations when initially proposing our changes to improve tenant participation. We are now working to incorporate the Cave recommendations together with recommendations from the Tenants Service Agency and National Tenant Voice into our existing structures. We will be working to ensure that tenants have a proper way of influencing matters relating to their tenancy. We will also ensure that the council supports all residents through capacity building measures and develops a variety of means for all residents to have a say and get involved with matters affecting their community.

Work is currently on going to develop a model that allocates specific responsibility for strategic direction but still emphasises that resident involvement is for all staff.

Clearly, the development of the resident involvement service must be in partnership with residents and initial discussion has taken place with representatives from the City Wide Board.'

## **Question 8**

### **Councillor Peter Offord to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-**

'Can the Council provide an update on the replacement of the water coolers in City Hall with non-disposable water drinking facilities?'

### **Councillor Alan Waters, Executive Member of Corporate Resources and Governance's reply:-**

'The scheme to remove the water coolers is in place, and this will be carried out as soon as existing stock of the water containers is used up. We are expecting this to be in about 6 week's time. The service will be replaced by jugs that will need to be filled from the chilled water taps nearby, and a supply of glasses in each meeting room.'

### **Question 9**

#### **Councillor Samir Jeraj to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development:-**

'After being 'surface dressed' at the end of 2007, Onley Street still has not had its road markings, and in particular it's parking lines, repainted. After several delays this is now to happen in the next month. Will the Executive member investigate a way to prevent such delays and problems happening when roads are resurfaced?'

#### **Councillor Brian Morrey, Executive Member for Sustainable City Development's reply:-**

'The majority of carriageway markings on Onley Street were repainted after surface dressing except for some parking restrictions at the Unthank Road end that could not be completed due to the presence of parked vehicles. Subsequent visits by the specialist lining contractor when working in the locality have also been thwarted including the latest attempt last week when parking services assisted in restricting vehicles parking but lining could not proceed due to inclement weather.

To avoid a recurrence, at the start of the 2008 season the Highways team engaged with the Contractor at an earlier stage of the improvements.

This has allowed lining works to be better identified and planned by the Contractor. This has meant that lining was completed in a timely manner after resurfacing during 2008.

Similar "early contractor involvement" arrangements will be made as part of the 2009 programme.'

### **Question 10**

#### **Councillor Janet Bearman to the Executive Member for Executive Member for Sustainable City Development's reply:-**

'Back in December I had a query from a resident about the 'officials', not apparently traffic police or wardens, directing traffic in busy places such as along Chapelfield Road, presumably to try to ease traffic congestion in the city. In his opinion they were making the situation worse as the traffic was taking little notice of them. He wanted to know who they were and whether they had been employed by the City Council or by the Chapelfield shopping centre. I e-mailed councillor enquiries on 2 December to enquire but to date have had no response. Could the Executive member tell me who these people were, if employed by the City Council how much they cost, did they ease the traffic and would the Council be employing them again?'

#### **Councillor Brian Morrey, Executive Member for Sustainable City Development's reply:-**

'Firstly let me apologise for the lack of response to your e-mail. Unfortunately it was assigned to a member of staff who was on long term sick leave, and who has subsequently retired. However, I would like to remind councillors that they can and



indeed should go to the Heads of Services or Directors if their queries go unanswered. It is far better to do this than wait maybe weeks to ask a question in Council, also it is helpful to senior officers to get information about unanswered queries.

The people directing the traffic at the busy times in the run up to Christmas were marshals from a company called Event Guard, who are accredited by the police for such duties. Their role was to ensure that the queues to the car parks did not obstruct the free flow of traffic on the highway.

The scheme originally started as a First Bus initiative. They employed the company for the six Saturdays running up to Christmas. The City Council made a financial contribution, along with the County Council and Chapelfield, to First Bus to support this initiative. On seeing how successful the scheme was, the County Council then decided to fund the marshals on Thursday evenings, Sundays and in the few days immediately before Christmas.

First bus have reported that at the times when Event Guard were working, bus reliability was much improved on previous years, when the timetable and I quote, "went out the window." This alone indicates that the marshals did indeed help keep the traffic flowing in the City. This was a very good idea and a good example of how we work with businesses and transport providers to deal with traffic problems that occur at peak periods like Christmas.

While it is not a decision for the City Council to take about the future of the scheme, we will of course be working with the County Council to consider whether the scheme should be repeated during busy times of the year. I understand that a decision is expected in the Spring.

#### **Question 11**

**Councillor Adrian Holmes to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-**

'Can the Executive member give an update on the state of the Norwich Livestock Market following the decision to upgrade the facilities made in December 2005?'

**Councillor Alan Waters, Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance's reply:-**

'The council carried out various works to upgrade the facilities, at a cost of £450,000. Subsequently other works have been carried out such as new fencing. The premises are let to a tenant who trades as Norwich Livestock Markets Ltd. and the agreement between the parties specifies the respective responsibilities about the upkeep of the market premises. The market operational and is regularly inspected by DEFRA.

There are ongoing negotiations, I will report back to Council once these are concluded.'

## **Question 12**

### **Councillor Eve Collishaw to the Executive Member for Neighbourhood Development:-**

'Will the Council be making a contribution to Catton Park in this financial year, which is used by local residents in wards such as Catton Grove, Mile Cross and Sewell, and is a valuable asset to the City?'

### **Councillor Blakeway, Executive Member for Neighbourhood Development's reply:-**

'I was rather surprised by this question from Councillor Collishaw as she is currently the City Council representative on the board of Trustees for the Catton Park Trust and as such should know, or be able to find out herself, the answer to the question that she has raised.

Catton Park, located to the east side of St Faiths Rd, lies outside of the current Norwich City Council boundary line and therefore comes under the responsibility of Broadland District Council. However, the City Council does appreciate that Catton Park is an important open space for the residents of North Norwich and is also of historical value. In recognition of this the City Council has, since the start of the project to develop the site as a publicly accessible open space, contributed with both officer time to advise the Trustees and with a number of small grants. As far as I am aware, the City Council has not received any requests for financial support from the Trustees of Catton Park Trust Ltd in the current financial year. If the Council receives a grant request from the Catton Park Trust it will be considered alongside all other requests for grant support that the Council receives. In addition, Catton Park is also due to receive a substantial amount of funding through the Greater Norwich Development Partnership Growth Points programme, if you require any further information about this funding please contact the GNDP chairman Councillor Morphew for more details.'

## **Question 13**

### **Councillor Niki George to the Executive Member for Children and Young People:-**

'Could the Executive Member tell us what input young people have had in shaping the new Community Centre on Bowthorpe Hall Road, what we can expect and when this exciting and important new facility will be operating at full capacity?'

### **Councillor Susan Sands, Executive Member for Children and Young People's reply:-**

'The building Councillor George refers to is a Norfolk County Council building which has been used as a pupil referral unit. The future of the building is being considered by the County Council through the Norwich schools re-organisation programme which includes the re-use of various school and related education buildings.

One option that officers understand is being considered is a “community hub” with various county council services being based there with evening use as a youth facility.

Further to Councillor George's question about youth consultation I can confirm that Lynette Raven the county community support coordinator working with the local Safer Neighbourhood Team surveyed Costessey High School pupils about their preferences for youth activity provision at Bowthorpe (in the former Pupil Referral Unit).

Children's services subsequently became involved to deliver the project. The official launch of the Unit as a Youth Club is on the 12th of March and local councillors Councillors Little and George will be invited to attend. Part of this week will be ‘taster’ sessions with a variety of activities for young people to participate so that they may make decisions about what they want to have at the centre. Also local young people will be involved in the naming of the centre and the repertory group ‘Stagers’ which is predominately youth is also relocating to the centre along with The Youth Cafe which was previously held at the Church and is now in the new centre. Members of the Youth Café were also consulted for their ideas and thoughts on the new centre.

Although Norfolk County Council is leading on this, I want to reaffirm Norwich City Council’s commitment to Children and Youth Services through my portfolio and my personal involvement with the setting up of the centre, along with Sergeant Bell from the local police, Ellen Van Lint from Children’s’ Services; Helen Newell the Head teacher from St Michaels and members of the Bowthorpe Community Partnership. Once all the activities have been confirmed and in place, we look forward to an exciting new facility which will benefit the children and youth of Bowthorpe.

I feel that Councillor George’s question is an important one because it highlights the need to have joined up service delivery, which will be achieved with a unitary Norwich City Council. Currently, he would need to contact Norfolk County Council as well, for further information about the progress of this Community Centre in his Norwich City ward, but with a unitary council, he could more easily obtain updates without the necessity of going to two different councils, to obtain information about Children and Youth Services for his ward.’

#### **Question 14**

#### **Councillor John Fisher to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-**

‘Further to Councillor Waters reply to Councillor A Little at a previous council meeting, now that the recession is deepening, what further plans does the Executive have for aiding local businesses in the light of the current circumstance? Could they, for example, consider offering advice and guidance to local small businesses and to those people who may find themselves redundant with an aim to begin starting a business with their redundancy money?’

**Councillor Alan Waters, the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance's reply:-**

'The council is working on a number of initiatives to support local people and businesses in a recession. Norwich City Council was successful in 2007 in securing over £11m of Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI) Funding and Norwich City Council's LEGI Programme provides financial resources to offer a wide range of advice and support services through an accredited provider network against three core objectives:

- increase new business start-up activity – particularly in Norwich's poorest wards;
- support sustainable growth and reduce the failure rate of locally owned businesses; and
- attract appropriate inward investment into deprived areas.

The LEGI Programme currently provides free business advice and training to both start-up and existing small businesses from Norwich Enterprise Centre and through a range of different providers in community locations throughout Norwich. Other LEGI-funded activities include a £240,000 small business loan fund for those unable to access mainstream bank finance and a small grant scheme and interest-free loans particularly targeting those facing redundancy who wish to start a small business.

In its first two years, the LEGI Programme has supported more than 3,000 people in Norwich with skills training, employment and business advice; helping to set up 119 new businesses in the City and creating 186 new jobs. Norwich City Council remains committed to delivering this Programme – in 2009 the LEGI Programme and many other economic development activities will be specifically tailored to further support the economic wellbeing of local businesses and individuals in these very challenging economic conditions.'

You can find out more information on the programme and a selection of successful case studies on the Go For it website: [www.goforitnorwich.co.uk](http://www.goforitnorwich.co.uk).

The city council is also doing its bit to support businesses in the city by endeavouring to pay invoices faster than the 30 day allocated period.

And finally, the council takes its leadership role very seriously in this respect and we are working with our partners on a number of high profile events in which we will be looking at how we can work together more effectively to tackle the recession and address issues around financial inclusion. These are being planned between now and the end of March.

**Question 15**

**Councillor Antony Little to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-**

'What services – both frontline and backroom – do we share with other authorities and what economies of scale and savings do we make through this?'

**Councillor Alan Waters. Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance's reply:-**

'This is our understanding of the frontline and backroom services we share with other authorities.

- Building control – CNC Building Control Partnership (Norwich Broadland and South Norfolk) – savings on management overheads
- Choice Based Lettings - Greater Norwich Partnership (Norwich Broadland and South Norfolk) – savings on management overheads
- Neighbourhood Wardens - Police authority – greater efficiency and improved customer service
- Disabled adaptations and upgrades – City Council and Norfolk County Council – improved customer service
- Mutual exchange website membership - Norwich with Circle Anglia for a large number of English authorities – improved customer service
- Norwich Community Alarm Service (part of Landlord Services, Tenancy Support Services) works with a number of partner authorities and organisations providing services.

These relate to over £100,000 of cost efficiencies.'

**Question 16**

**Councillor Mary Cannell to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development:-**

'Norwich City Council had a recycling rate of 14.7% in March 2006, since then a considerable amount of work has been put in by the Executive and Council to meet the Executive's target of being one of the best performing Council's by 2012. Through cross party working AWC has been introduced very successfully as well as a subscription green waste collection service. With all this hard work going on can the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development give the Council an update on the latest position so that it can see if all this effort is working.'

**Councillor Brian Morrey, Executive Member for Sustainable City Development's reply:-**

'At the last Full Council I reported that our recycling rate for September was 35%. I can now report that we have done even better and recycled and composted 39.7% of our domestic waste in November. Overall this gives us an annual rate of 34.4% which is over twice as much as in March 2006. It is something that we can all be proud off especially our residents since without their contribution we could not make it happen.

Our action to date includes the following: -

- (1) Introducing AWC to 48,000 homes in three stages;
- (2) successful introduction of garden waste collections to nearly 8,000 subscribers;

- (3) one of the few authorities in the country to carry out a city-wide glass collection service;
- (4) Introduction of “recycling on the go” around the city centre;
- (5) reducing the growth in household waste by promoting waste reduction and reuse initiatives – we have collected 2,000 tonnes less waste in the first six months of this year than in the same period last year;
- (6) promotion of good waste management practices through public education and awareness campaigns;
- (7) working with our neighbours to implement the joint municipal waste strategy for Norfolk which is on track to achieve its targets for this year.

In comparison with others the latest national figures available are for April to June 2008. Our dry recycling rate (i.e. plastics, cardboard, tin cans, paper, and glass bottles) was 25% for this period which puts us 73<sup>rd</sup> out of 273 councils. If the rate for November of 31% for dry recyclables is used this would move us up to 15<sup>th</sup> overall and just outside the top 5% of all local authorities across England. To put this into context when we took over the administration of the Council it was in the bottom 10% of councils in the country for recycling rates.

It should also be noted that a recent audit of our material collected for recycling showed that we only had a contamination rate of 5.9% - the lowest in Norfolk – indicating our residents are doing their bit to get things right and manage their waste in a sustainable way. This has also meant that NEWS who sort our recycling have been able to find markets in a difficult time for recycling since the material is of better quality than that being produced by other local authorities outside of Norfolk. I would urge all residents to carry on sorting their rubbish and would ask them to continue to make sure they are using the right container for their waste i.e.:

Black/green wheelie bin for rubbish

Blue bin for paper, card, tin cans and plastic bottles

Green box for glass bottles

If they need a glass box all our residents need do is ring the customer contact team who will arrange for one to be delivered.

With regard to our composting rate and the garden waste collection service our rate is just over 6%. The top performing authorities are achieving composting rates of over 40%. However, these tend to be rural districts councils who have had green waste collections for a longer period and do offer free collections. It is also worth noting that they also produce the most household waste per head of population. It was a conscious decision of the authority to have an opt in subscription service as there are many flats in Norwich and other properties which do not have gardens and therefore do not produce such waste in the first place. We did not consider it to be fair to impose a charge through the council tax to all since so many people could not use the service.

I think overall there has been tremendous progress due to the hard work and commitment of all involved including Waste Working Party, officers and our contractors to ensure we have in place easily accessible recycling facilities for our residents to use.

The coming year will see increased recycling provision for those living in our city centre and we will begin to look at other waste streams such as the bulky item service and kitchen waste to ensure we are diverting as much material as possible from landfill. With this and all of the above successes I believe we are well on the way to achieving our stated objectives.'

#### **Question 17**

#### **Councillor Susan Sands to the Executive Member for Community Safety and Community Cohesion:-**

'On the basis of the question to council in September, would the Executive member for Community Safety and Community Cohesion update the council on the progress of CCTV cameras in the city?'

#### **Councillor Bert Bremner, Executive Member for Community Safety and Community Cohesion's reply:-**

'In my reply to a question in Council in September 2008, we were told:

Over £113,000 has been secured from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, Home Office Anti-social Behaviour Unit/Respect Task Force/ and the Safer Norwich Partnership and in 2007-8 £335,000 was secured from the LEGI programme (Local Enterprise Growth Initiative) for CCTV. These are Labour Government initiatives that the City is benefitting from."

A number of areas were identified for CCTV. The locations of these and progress by the end of September were:

- |                                   |           |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| • Mile Cross (Lefroy Road area)   | completed |
| • Chapelfield Gardens (2 cameras) | completed |
| • Eaton Park                      | completed |
| • Waterloo Park                   | completed |
| • St Giles/Guildhall              | completed |
| • Pottergate                      | completed |
| • Heartsease (1 of 2)             | completed |

The LEGI programme funded cameras were:

- |                                   |           |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| • Mile Cross/Drayton Road shops   | completed |
| • Vauxhall Street – 2 cameras     | completed |
| • Earlham West Centre - 2 cameras | completed |

It was then explained that there were hold-ups at three shopping areas where the Council was working in partnership with EDF to finalise electricity supply. It was anticipated at that point that the supply would be connected by the end of October 2008 and the cameras installed within two days of works being completed. These were:

- Knowland Grove shops, Wensum
- Waldegrave shops, Clover Hill, Bowthorpe
- Bishopbridge Road shops/ Ketts Hill roundabout area, Thorpe Hamlet

In the September question it was explained that in five other areas the electricity supply was to come from street lighting and the Council were working with Norfolk County Council's Street Lighting Team and their contractor. The City Council funded the purchase and installation of new lighting columns in the following areas and we were then waiting for these to be delivered and fitted to accommodate the cameras. The five areas were:

- Hall Road, St John's Close, Lakenham
- Long John Hill, Lakenham
- Colman Road, University Ward
- Dereham Road/ Distillery Square, Mancroft Ward
- Witard Road, Crome Ward

On 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2008 I visited all the sites to see what progress was in place and was pleased to see visible posts or new lampposts in place ready for the cameras to be installed in all locations (except in Waldegrave, Bowthorpe).

Unfortunately, there was a problem at Winchester Tower that led to a hold up for all the camera installations. Winchester Tower houses some of the nodes for the camera transmission links to the CCTV control room.

I am pleased to report that installation of the fittings and connections for the cameras started on January 19<sup>th</sup> and all the cameras should be installed and in operation by the end of January. There might be a problem on Bishopbridge Road shops/ Ketts Hill roundabout, where the column and ducting is installed and we are waiting on County contractor Amey to sort out the electricity supply.

I am expecting a further update report on progress at the end of January.'

#### **Question 18**

##### **Councillor David Fairbairn to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance:-**

'The preamble to the Executive's Community Engagement Strategy sets out a neighbourhood vision where 'communities are engaged, listened to, and empowered'. Does the Executive Member believe that this year's public consultation on the budget 'empowers' the people of Norwich? Beyond its statutory obligations, is the council doing anything to actually give people the opportunity to influence budget decisions?'

##### **Councillor Alan Waters, Executive Member for Corporate Resources and Governance's reply:-**

'The Council will be consulting the public on its approach to setting the budget for 2009/10 at the following meetings:-

- 28<sup>th</sup> January: Public Meeting
- 29<sup>th</sup> January: Tenants Representatives
- 30<sup>th</sup> January: Public Meeting
- 6<sup>th</sup> February: Business Breakfast



We will also be sending out a document to key stakeholders.

The Council also considers a wide range of people on issues throughout the year. The outcomes of these are now consolidated through an internal Consultation Co-ordination Group, and are used to inform service development and improvement. The setting of the budget is the end of this process.

The rapid down turn in economy has changed the way in which the budget needs to be framed. The setting of this budget is especially difficult and the council, as do most councils in this country, has some challenging issues to face. Unfortunately this means we will not be looking at new developments but rather rationing resources and scaling down activity to reflect the reduced resources available. These are issues we will be discussing in full during the consultation period.'

### **Question 19**

#### **Councillor Judith Lubbock to the Leader of the Council:-**

'To date no Labour politician has taken responsibility for the political failures which led to the housing scandal of Greyhound Opening. Please could the Executive Members Morphey, Morrey and Arthur - all of whom I understand have some aspect of housing in their portfolio (which may account for the lack of oversight) - say who had responsibility in March 2007 when a decision was taken to decommission Greyhound Opening and who has responsibility today?'

#### **Councillor Steve Morphey, Leader of the Council's reply:-**

'I do not accept that there have been political failures, but as Councillor Lubbock well knows we have adopted recommendations to review the way the system works to try to avoid future problems. The monitoring officer has confirmed that the decision making framework is in place and is sound, but was not followed by certain officers on this occasion.

Strategic Housing was moved from the Housing portfolio in May 2007 and included in the Growth and Development portfolio that I held during that civic year. The redevelopment of the site for the future rests with the City Development portfolio held by Councillor Morrey. This reflects the changes that have occurred as the growth targets for the city and partnership working arrangements have meant we have changed the approach to meet the needs for the future. We have been operating with a distinction between management of the existing stock and providing new homes for the future for some time and I recall discussing this with the leader of the opposition when the changes were first made, not least as we asked him to relinquish a seat on the Greater Norwich Housing Partnership (GNHP). Councillor Arthur was not elected to the council until 2008 and holds the portfolio that includes existing housing stock and tenants. However, as council is aware no Executive member has any devolved individual decision making powers and formal decisions are made either by the full Executive or by officers using powers delegated to them. This framework was validated by the monitoring officer and reviewed by Phil Watson in his report. This decision making framework has been in existence since the Council adopted the Executive model in 2000.

I am concerned that Councillor Lubbock does not seem to be aware who had what responsibilities. Although she makes no specific reference to 2007/8, it was mostly during that period the successful relocation of tenants took place and the decisions about allowing non relocating staff to move in were improperly taken. I have to presume she was equally unaware of which portfolio was responsible for what during that period.

I am perplexed as to how she could have managed to perform her responsibilities satisfactorily without that rather basic and publicly available knowledge, in particular as a member of the Scrutiny Committee if she did not know who she was holding to account. Council will want to know whether her lack of knowledge was because she was not told, failed to ask or whether she really knew and is just trying to score points.'

## **Question 20**

### **Councillor Bert Bremner to the Executive Member for Sustainable City Development:-**

'In May 2006 the Labour administration set out a target of delivering 1000 new affordable homes by March 2009. Can you report on the delivery against this target?'

### **Councillor Brian Morrey, Executive Member for Sustainable City Development's reply:-**

'The 1,000 affordable homes target has been met ahead of time and has in fact been exceeded due to the hard work of the Strategic Housing department.

The target was to provide 1,000 affordable homes between the periods April 2006 to April 2009 and we actually achieved this target four months early. To date the total affordable homes provided stands at 1,037 and it is expected to reach over 1,100 homes by April 2009.

The 1,037 affordable homes comprise of:

- 748 new build properties
- 226 properties in the Private Sector Leasing Scheme
- 32 Key Worker Living completions
- 28 Open Market Homebuy completions
- 3 Acquisitions

Of the 748 new build properties, 361 have been built on Norwich City Council land which was then transferred to Registered Social Landlords. 387 were gained through Section 106 contributions from private developments within the city.

646 of the new build properties were for rent and were let to people on the Norwich Housing Register. 102 were for Low Cost Home Ownership to allow people to get on the property ladder.

The 226 properties in the Private Sector Leasing Scheme are private properties which have been offered to the Council by landlords to let to people in housing need.

Open Market Homebuy is a scheme which enables an applicant to purchase 75% of a property on the open market and then fund the remaining 25% through an equity loan. Key Worker Living is a scheme which assists key workers to purchase a home in an area close to where they work at an affordable price. Meanwhile the three acquisition properties were acquired by Cotman Housing and let to tenants of the Norwich Housing Register.

Reaching and exceeding the 1,000 affordable homes is a fantastic achievement and these have helped meet the growing need for affordable housing in Norwich.'